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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Letter dated 10 August 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission to Georgia regarding the bombing of the territory of Georgia on 6 August 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 27.

(*Signed*) Irakli **Chikovani**
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Annex to the letter dated 10 August 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
Mission to Georgia: spot report

Topic:	**Tsitelubani missile incident**
Date:	**8 August 2007**

Summary A guided missile impacted in the area of the Georgian administered village of Tsitelubani in the south eastern part of the zone of conflict without causing causalities or major damage. A joint JPKF/OSCE monitoring team was deployed in the early morning of 7 August to examine the site. The Georgian authorities accused the Russian Federation of violation of the Georgian-Russian state border, intrusion into Georgian airspace and the bombing of Georgian territory by Russian military aircraft. The Russian authorities in turn denied any involvement. **End of Summary**

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Narrative

At around 04:00 in the morning of 7 August, the Mission was informed by the Georgian authorities that a missile impact site was found near the Georgian administered village of Tsitelubani, in the south eastern part of the zone of conflict close to the main east west highway (M27). According to the Georgian authorities, the impact was linked to the alleged violation of Georgian airspace by Russian SU-type aircraft which crossed into Georgian airspace and dropped the missile before returning into Russian airspace again.

It was agreed that a joint JPKF/OSCE monitoring team (JMT) be deployed to the site in early morning. The Mission Chief Monitoring Officer arrived at the spot from Tbilisi at approximately 07:00, and the JMT at around 08:30. The Georgian Interior Minister, the Head of the Georgian Air Force, the Chief of Shida Kartli Police and many other officials as well as some press officers were already present at the site.

The JMT examined the site and took photographs of the missile parts. The missile was identified as a guided missile approximately 3M in length and 40CM in diameter. It was assessed that the warhead had not detonated on impact.

The JMT was shown by Georgian officials a radar print-out that indicated a track entering the area from the north east and then exiting the same way. From the print out the aircraft was assumed to be a single aircraft but there was also an opinion held by some Georgian representatives on the ground that two aircraft might have been involved. The radar print out showed that aircraft entered and exited Georgian airspace in the area close to the town of Stepantsminda (formerly Kazbegi) at 14:31GMT and 14:41GMT respectively (local time is GMT+4), flying at an altitude of approximately 3700M.

The JMT could not definitely identify the missile type at this stage, and neither the type or number of aircraft.

The JMT was then asked to exit the cordoned area as the Georgian engineers wanted to recover more of the missile. The JPKF Commander who was at the site gave a short interview to the press. At approximately 12:35 the Georgian engineers invited the JMT to examine the recovered central section of the missile and more photographs were taken.

In relation to this incident, at the JPKF morning briefing of 7 August, information was passed by the Chief of Staff of the Russian battalion of the JPKF, who chaired the meeting, that two nearby JPKF Observation Posts (OP) manned by personnel of the North Ossetian battalion (at Didi Gromi and Tsinagari) reported over flights. The Didi Gromi OP 12KM north north west of Tsitelubani reported an aircraft flying from south west to north east and reported seeing a missile launched towards the north. It was also stated that the approximate altitude of the aircraft was 3000M. The Tsinagari OP 4KM north north east of Tsitelubani reported hearing a missile impact to the north of their OP but nothing else.

At 13:00, the JMT was sent to check these OPs and left the impact site. At Tsinagari OP, the OP commander and other personnel stated that on 6 August at 18:40 – 18:45 local time they observed one aircraft flying from north east to south west at about 3KM altitude. Before the aircraft reached the OP, it reportedly launched a rocket. It then turned and flew back to north east. The same information was given at Didi Gromi OP. The only difference was that the JPKF personnel there reportedly heard and saw the launch of a rocket right above their OP.

The JMT also went to the Ossetian administered village of Kvemo-Zakhori 4KM northeast of Didi Gromi. Villagers there confirmed the details of the over flight as reported by the two JPKF OPs and also confirmed the rocket launch to the south of the village.

In the early morning of 8 August, the JPKF Commander decided to send another JMT to the area around the impact site to gather more eyewitness accounts related to the incident.

Other developments

The same day on 7 August, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Georgia was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the Georgian side according to a statement posted on the Ministry's website "expressed a firm protest over the violation of the Georgian-Russian state border, intrusion into Georgian airspace and the bombing of the Georgian territory by Russian military aircraft on 6 August 2007 and assessed this act as undisguised aggression and gross violation of sovereignty of the country". The statement continued that at the meeting the Georgian side categorically demanded clear and immediate explanations from the Russian side.

Representatives of the Russian authorities the same day ruled out any involvement in this incident and stated, among other things, that no aircraft from the Russian Air Force made any flights in the area at the time in question, and that no trespassing over the border into Georgia took place. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed extreme concern about the incident and called for a thorough and speedy investigation.

Later in the day, the Mission attended a briefing by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this incident for the diplomatic corps. The Acting Head of Mission went together with other representatives of the diplomatic corps to the impact site at Tsitelubani, where an additional briefing in the presence of

President Saakashvili took place. The Georgian President called on the international community to respond adequately to this incident.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office Miguel Angel Moratinos expressed his deepest concern over the incident in a statement issued on 7 August.